

VZCZCXRO5748
RR RUEHDBU
DE RUEHNT #1752 2831211
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 101211Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8582
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3336
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9534
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 3952
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 3815

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001752

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/10/2017

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: CONTACT REPORTEDLY FIRED AFTER MEETING POLOFF

REF: TASHKENT 1661

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) During an Embassy event on October 9, journalist and human rights contact Bakhodir Elibaev (strictly protect) told poloff that he was fired from his job as a translator at a Turkish firm shortly after meeting with poloff on September 13. Elibaev continues to work informally as a stringer for Tashkent-based human rights activist Surat Ikramov, reporting on human rights and other issues in the Ferghana Valley, and has recently been awarded a grant from post's Democracy Commission.

12. (C) Poloff met Elibaev for the first time at his house in the town of Rishton during a trip through the Ferghana Valley in mid-September to investigate reports of rising prices for basic staples and demonstrations (reftel). During their meeting, Elibaev told poloff that he was contacted by the National Security Service (NSS) on September 12 and asked why he was going to meet with poloff. Elibaev believed that the NSS had learned about the meeting from listening to earlier phone conversations between Elibaev and poloff. On October 9, Elibaev told poloff that the day after their meeting in September, NSS officers visited his house and asked him and his family about their conversations with poloff. Elibaev said that a few days later, the NSS also called the Turkish company, which is currently constructing a new factory to process silk on the outskirts of Rishton, and pressured them to let go of Elibaev, who had worked at the company since February.

13. (C) Despite being a breadwinner for his family, Elibaev did not appear to be too upset at losing his job. He noted that his application to monitor violations of basic social, economic and civil rights in the Ferghana Valley had been recently accepted by post's Democracy Commission, and he expected to be able to live off the salary provided for in the grant for the next several months. Elibaev is also occasionally paid for writing articles on human rights issues for Surat Ikramov's NGO, the Initiative Group of Independent Human Rights Defenders of Uzbekistan.

14. (C) This has not been the first time Elibaev has been fired for his human rights and journalistic activities. During their meeting on September 13, Elibaev told poloff that he had been fired from three newspapers for articles that he had written, and another two newspapers that he tried to open himself were shut down after just a few issues. He said that he has tried unsuccessfully to find work as a journalist with local papers in the Ferghana Valley and believes that he has been blacklisted. Elibaev graduated from the World Language Institute in Tashkent with a degree in journalism in 2003 and speaks passable English.

15. (C) Comment: Elibaev's firing is just the latest example of recent government efforts to apply pressure on individuals who agree to meet with Embassy poloffs. We are concerned with how our contacts are treated, but we will not be deterred from maintaining a broad base of people with whom we stay in touch and will continue to report on any harassment they experience.

NORLAND